

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000830

SIPDIS

CENTCOM AND EUCOM: PLEASE PASS TO POLAD AND J-5

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: ANTI-AMERICAN MEDIA CAMPAIGN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

REF: A. ANKARA 549

[B](#). ANKARA 618

[C](#). ISTANBUL 127

[D](#). 02 ANKARA 1204

[E](#). 02 ANKARA 8994

[F](#). 02 ANKARA 2431

[G](#). ANKARA 745

(U) Classified by Polcouns John Kunstadter; reasons: 1.5 (b,d)

[1](#). (C) Summary: Amid an edgy public mood over Iraq, a strident anti-American propaganda campaign is underway in Turkey, encouraged by various political and Turkish State actors. According to our contacts, such rhetoric is resonating with the man on the street, who is (1) convinced that an operation will tank Turkey's already weak economy and (2) susceptible to arguments that the U.S.'s anti-Saddam policy is motivated by anti-Muslim feelings. That the Kurds of Southeastern Turkey reportedly are less susceptible to "Turkish" propaganda is further feeding official and press paranoia about U.S. intentions. End summary.

Multiheaded Anti-Americanism

[2](#). (C) A number of actors, including politicians, media, and elements of the Turkish State, have a hand in the current anti-American propaganda effort.

-- Ref (A) notes recent allegations in the press, including in media baron Aydin Dogan's mainstream daily "Milliyet", of USG support for the terrorist PKK/KADEK. As reported in Ref (B), the MFA has strongly intimated to us that suspicions in the Turkish General Staff (TGS), reflected in a report leaked to the press alleging contact between DoD officials and the PKK, are driving the current press campaign. Jan. 29 edition of "Hurriyet," another Dogan Group mass daily, ran a column asserting that Parliament's Human Rights committee recently met with incarcerated PKK Number Two man Semdin Sakik (aka Fingerless Zeki), captured in 1998. According to "Hurriyet," Sakik claimed the PKK acquired U.S. weapons left behind after the first Gulf War -- and that the USG supports establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Iraq. In a private meeting with us Jan. 29, Human Rights committee chairman Elkatmis (AK Party) portrayed himself as buying Sakik's remarks. Continuing to play to latent anti-American instincts in his left-of-center CHP, main opposition leader Deniz Baykal also promoted the Sakik remarks in a CNN Turk interview on Feb. 2.

-- Internet-based letter-writing protest campaigns are underway against the U.S. (ref G); we are charged with nefarious "plans" for Turkey. One e-mail form letter admonishes the Embassy not to "take our hospitality for granted; we have other characteristics as a nation which you should certainly get a better grasp of (sic)." Consular section has already received about 450 such e-mails.

-- Ref (C) notes that the Genc (Youth) Party of Motorola deadbeat Cem Uzan is waging a virulent anti-American mass media campaign of its own. Genc is using both the Uzan family's own extensive TV and newspaper resources and daily ads on page two of Dogan group papers (including "Milliyet," which gave front-page coverage and legitimacy to the U.S.-PKK story). TV and print ads depict a devastated landscape, ask "who will America hit" -- the clear implication is that Turkey will suffer -- and assert that Turkey has no interest in being used by the U.S. to strike "another Muslim country."

-- Recent protest marches in Istanbul and Ankara by an

amalgam of left-right and Islamic activists featured diatribes against U.S. "imperialism" and chants proclaiming the greatness of God. While expressing solidarity with the Iraqi people, demonstrators also waved posters portraying Saddam as a sympathetic hero. Several contacts, including the Turkish correspondent for a British defense weekly and a former Turkish NSC staffer who has maintained close ties to the TGS, have drawn our attention to the fact that until the last month anti-American protest marches -- including a large one planned for Izmir -- had consistently been disallowed by the authorities. Approval of marches now is an indirect way for the Turkish State to signal its criticism of U.S. policy, our contacts independently noted.

13. (C) Contacts of all stripes and levels suggest to us that the campaign is feeding simmering perceptions and resentment:

-- Ankara Mayor Melih Gokcek told us Jan. 27 that his own polls show Genc, which came out of nowhere before the Nov. 3 elections and made a surprisingly strong run for Parliament, as Turkey's second most popular party, ahead of the opposition CHP though still behind the ruling AKP. AK party vice chairman for political strategy echoed this view to us Jan. 29.

-- Former P.M. Ecevit has been featured in the media reiterating blanket assertions that he has long been aware of U.S. support for the PKK.

-- Picking up on similar allegations, Mumtaz Yavuz, Vice Chairman of right-of-center True Path Party (DYP) told us Jan. 28 that new DYP boss Mehmet Agar is charging that "there would not be 30 thousand (sic) PKK members in Northern Iraq without the support of the USG." Yavuz also asserted that the USG is supporting a de facto Kurdish state in Iraq and admonished us to abide by a "Turkish State view" on Kurdish issues. Agar, a former interior minister and senior police official and now the chairman of right-of-center DYP, is intimately familiar with the reality of USG support for Turkey against PKK/KADEK, but insists on perpetuating the myth of the U.S.-PKK connection. Turks also label him as: 1) a symbol of what they call the "Deep State" owing to his implication in the notorious 1996 Susurluk scandal, which gave the Turkish public a penetrating -- if fleeting -- glimpse at the then-prevalent connections among the armed forces, security and intel services, extrajudicial hit squads, and groups like Turkish Hizbullah; and 2) a politician with particularly strong ties to organized crime hit squads (refs E,F).

14. (C) Conversations with ordinary citizens bear out the success of the campaign. In recent days, Turks on the street have: 1) accused us of threatening to "kill children" in Iraq; 2) charged that the USG agenda "is all about oil;" and 3) asserted that we are hamstringing the AK Government by preventing it from focusing on the shaky Turkish economy. A Fulbrighter reported to us receiving a death threat from a group of street toughs -- the target audience of the Genc campaign -- out seeking confrontation with Americans. Other contacts, from tradesmen and taxi drivers to M.P.s, tell us the worst part is the uncertainty they see in U.S. policy, an uncertainty fueling continuing uncertainty at the retail level: "Just get it over with" is a common refrain.

"Aren't the Kurds Muslims, Too?"

15. (C) The one region of Turkey where anti-American sentiments appear to be minimal is the predominately Kurdish Southeast (ref D). In recent days, Southeastern contacts including several CHP and AK M.P.s -- ethnic Turks and Kurds alike -- prominent figures in the nominally illegal Naksibendi tarikati (a sufi order particularly influential in the region), and NGO reps, have suggested to us that local Kurds support immediate USG intervention in Iraq. Some of Turkey's Kurds, they note, also have close, even familial, ties to Masud Barzani and the KDP. According to our contacts, Kurds are looking forward to the prospect of what they hope are thousands of American soldiers bringing economic benefits with them to the Southeast.

16. (C) Above all, our contacts express hope that the presence of U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Southeastern Turkey would make it harder for the Turkish State to repress Kurds on either side of the border. As one CHP M.P. from Diyarbakir told us Jan. 27, his constituents' primary concern is that the Turkish military might "precipitate a massacre" of Kurds to

keep the lid on the region. One Naksibendi Shaykh asked us rhetorically Jan. 24 if Embassy ever wonders why "they" -- meaning the Turks -- "have only enemies everywhere?" Another Naksibendili, formerly an M.P. with the Islamist Refah party and affiliated with Saadet, told us recently that he and other Kurds had expressed their displeasure to AK with the recent visit to Iraq by AK Trade Minister Kursad Tuzmen, a nationalist formerly with the right-wing MHP. "The Turks say we don't want to make war on Muslims," he said. "We asked them (the GOT) 'aren't the Kurds Muslims, too?'"

Comment

17. (C) We have been vigorously rebutting the scurrilous U.S.-PKK accusations at all levels of the GOT and the political class. In this context we note that, beyond the evident hardening of public attitudes as a result of the media campaign, several aspects of this story potentially have an even more profound impact on efforts to promote USG equities here. One factor is the willing participation of mainstream press barons with close pecuniary and other ties to the Establishment. Resorting to Sakik "confessions" is a tried and true tactic. In 1998, the mainstream press highlighted alleged Sakik "confessions" to the security forces implicating numerous politicians and several journalists with a balanced view of the U.S., forcing at least one journalist, Cengiz Candar, to go into self-imposed exile in Washington for a time.

PEARSON